



# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 1997 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Most women will spend over thirty years of their lives at risk of pregnancy<sup>1</sup> and will have many more births than they desire if they are sexually active and do not use contraception.<sup>2</sup> Prior to the 1997 California Women's Health Survey, there was a deficit of California statewide data on contraceptive utilization. Patterns of contraceptive use were derived from nationwide surveys and small clinic-based reports.

The 1997 California Women's Health Survey asked a series of questions about contraceptive utilization including **"Are you or your male sexual partner using a birth control method to prevent pregnancy?"** and **"Which birth control method or methods are you using?"**

- Over 70% of women in California who are at risk of unintended

pregnancy use some method of birth control.

- Age and educational attainment are the most significant factors explaining the use of birth control, with younger women and more educated women being more likely than other women to use contraception.
- Oral contraceptives and condoms are the most popular methods of contraception. Sterilization is the third most common method. Condoms and oral contraceptives are methods used primarily by younger women, while sterilization is the method used most by older women.
- Of those women who are at high risk of a sexually transmitted disease,<sup>3</sup> only 46% report that they always use a barrier method.

## CONTRACEPTIVE UTILIZATION

*Office of Family Planning*

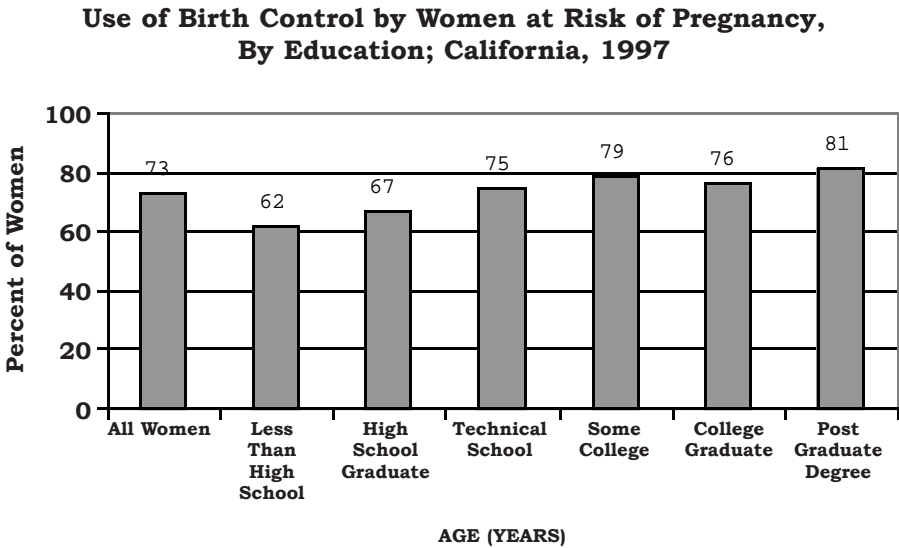
1 For the purposes of the contraceptive utilization analysis, to be at risk of pregnancy, a woman must have had a partner in the past year, not be infertile, and neither be trying to get pregnant nor be pregnant. Sterilized women are included since sterilization is considered a method of family planning.

2 According to the 1997 California Women's Health Survey, the median age at first intercourse is 18 years and the median age of onset of menopause is 49 years.

3 Women are considered at high risk of an STD if they have had a new partner or more than one partner in the past year.

### Public Health Message:

*These findings suggest that many women in California who do not want to become pregnant are not using birth control. Noting the important role of education in the decision to use contraception, the new state family planning program, Family PACT provides education and counseling around contraceptive issues for low income women.*



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